COMMANDERS DIGEST

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Overview

Mission, Responsibilities Of Joint Chiefs Explained

By Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

The responsibilities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the manner in which the Organization of the JCS functions on a day-to-day basis are frequently misunderstood both within and without the military establishment.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff are responsible for the strategic direction of the Armed Forces, acting within the guidelines provided by policies, programs, and directives approved and promulgated by the President of the United States or the Secretary of Defense.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not command forces; they do not establish national policy with respect to military force levels. However, as the principal military advisors to the President and Secretary of Defense, **they do make recommendations with respect to all such matters.**

Approximately three years ago, a report by the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel —a civilian group appointed by the President to study and make recommendations on the organization and management of the Department of Defense— was critical of the committee nature of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a decision-mechanism. This criticism, no doubt, was based in part on the JCS method of developing JCS papers through a systemized process—commonly referred to in military parlance as the flimsy, buff, green process—which can culminate with the paper being put before the Joint Chiefs for decision. This process is frequently time-consuming, and for very good reason—the papers are very complex, far-reaching in scope and implication, and they require broad coordination. They simply take time. But it is important to note that last year (1972), of the thousands of papers processed within the Joint Staff, only 2.8 percent were decisioned by the Chiefs, with the remainder processed through other authorized decision methods. **So any suggestion that all JCS decisions are the result of committee action by the Chiefs is without foundation.**

The Joint Chiefs of Staff must also deal on an almost daily basis with issues that are time-sensitive. Such issues are normally handled directly by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, coordinating as necessary with the Secretary of Defense. **The Chairman knows, in general, what the other Chiefs think about various issues and problems and he acts for them.** When a Unified Commander requests a time-critical decision, he does not expect to wait for a meeting of the JCS for his answer, and it just does not happen that way.

The Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is as prepared for rapid response to operational requirements as it is for deliberation of long-range issues and problems.

Aside from responsibilities in the purely military stream of events, the Joint Chiefs of Staff play an active role in the national policy-making process.

Under the Nixon Administration, planning, analysis, and review of policy issues is a function of the National Security Council system. **The apex of the system is the National Security Council (NCS), established by law.** The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, is not a statutory member of the NSC but he does regularly attend Council meetings as a military advisor.

Supporting and assisting the National Security Council are six senior bodies, each having a different authority and function in the realm of either policy issue preparation or decision implementation. The JCS Chairman is a member of all six of these groups and ensures that JCS views are fully made known, to be considered along with the views and recommendations of other agencies.

At the lower tier of the NCS system are interdepartmental groups which are the basic groups for policy study and analysis. These groups, chaired by Assistant Secretaries of State, draw upon all Departments and Agencies of the Executive Branch of the Government for knowledge, imagination and experience. The JCS are represented on all of these groups by a member(s) of the Joint Staff, with the full facility of the organization available for assistance as necessary.

Through the NCS system, the military viewpoint on all significant issues is made known to the President for his consideration in the formulation of policy for national security and foreign affairs.

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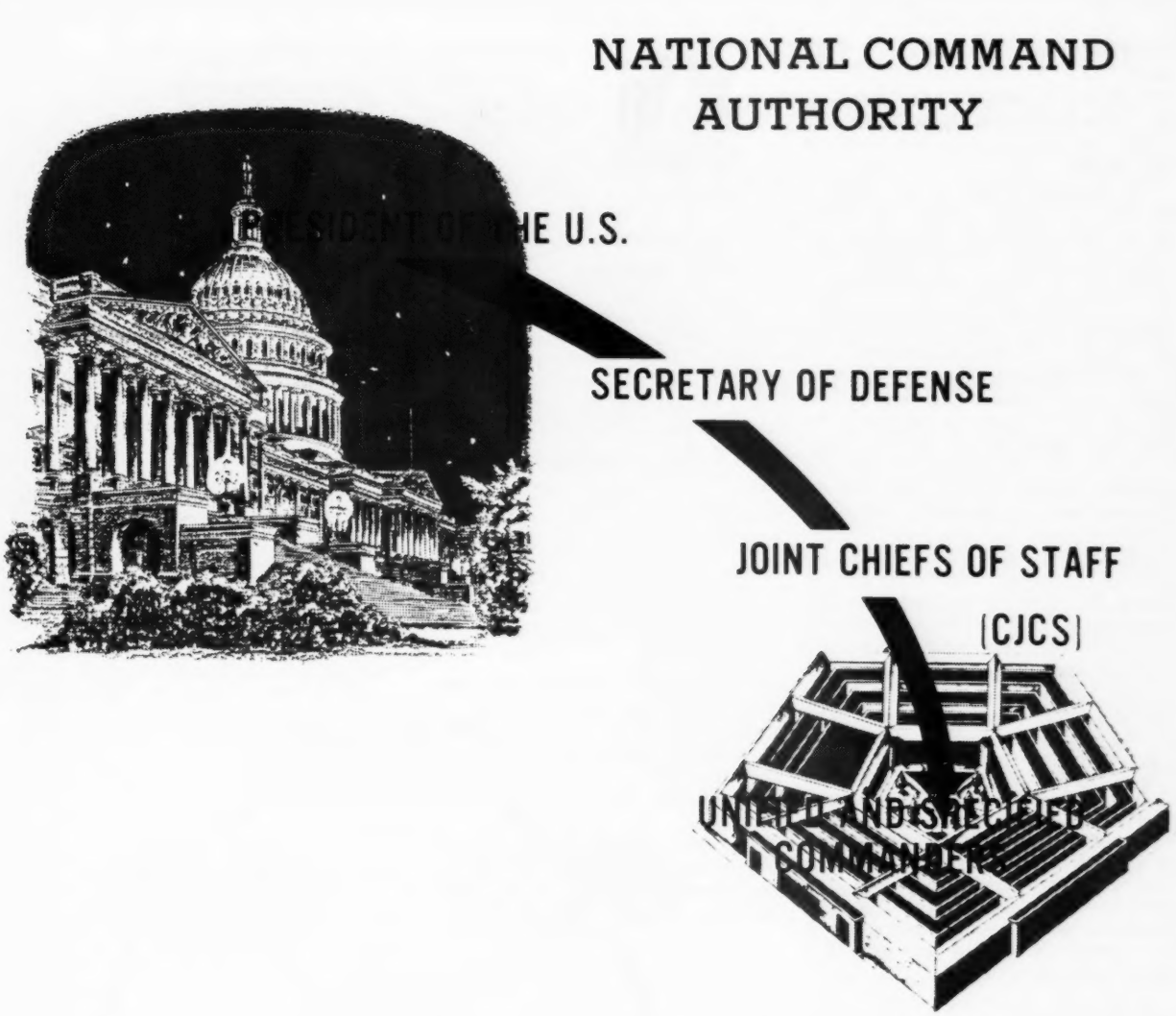


Unique Group of Military Professionals

Organization and Functions of the JCS

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) comprise a uniquely democratic group of military professionals. Although they are the highest ranking military men in the land, they wield no command authority.

In order to present a general perspective of the overall Joint Chiefs of Staff structure, it is necessary to visualize the JCS within the framework of the highest level of the organization for national security.

The President of the United States, as the Chief of State and Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces, is the head of the structure for the total security of this Nation. The principal agencies established to assist the President in providing for national security, are the National Security Council and the Department of Defense.

Upon taking office in 1969, President Richard Nixon vitalized the National Security Council as the principal forum

for consideration of national security issues. The Council, chaired by the President, is comprised of the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and others whom the President may invite.

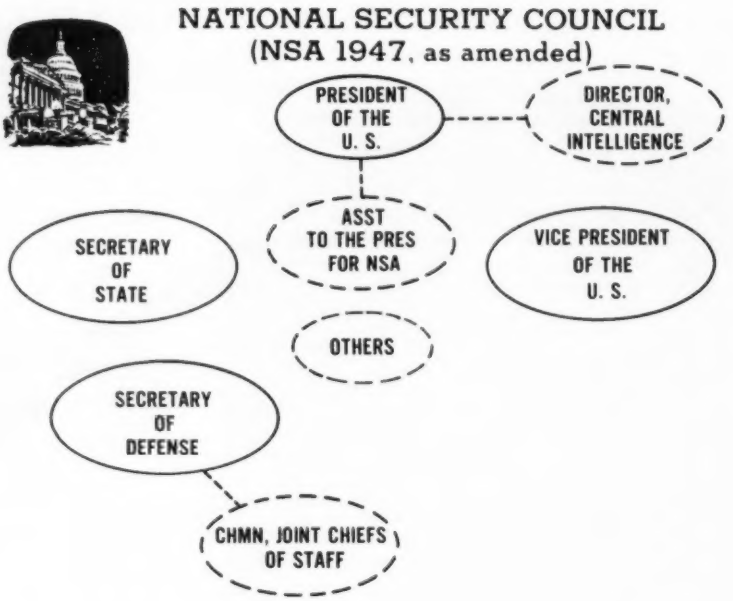
The Council, which is the apex of the national security structure, is served by several supporting committees and interagency groups which are the basic sub-groups for policy analysis. Membership on these groups includes representatives from appropriate agencies, including the Chairman of the JCS.

The Verification Panel is a special group which helps to develop choices and proposals on arms control subjects. **The Washington Special Action Group** develops options for implementation of decisions during crises. **The Defense Program Review Committee** relates defense programs and resources requirements to overall national priorities and the Federal budget. **The Senior Review Group** reviews policy studies prior to the presentation to the National Security Council to be certain that they present the facts, the issues and a range of alternatives for decision. Finally, to assure effective implementation of policy, there is the **Under Secretaries Committee** which helps to ensure that decisions are carried out uniformly throughout the security affairs community.

In operation of the top-level policy system, every attempt is made to anticipate the problems and issues which may arise, to develop policy in the context of long-range goals, and to avoid, insofar as is practicable, the change of policy on a day-to-day basis.

Under the direction of the President, the Secretary of Defense has direction, authority and control over the entire Department of Defense. Within the Department are the Office of the Secretary of Defense; the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Defense agencies; the Unified and Specified Commands; and the three Military Departments—Army, Air Force, and Navy.

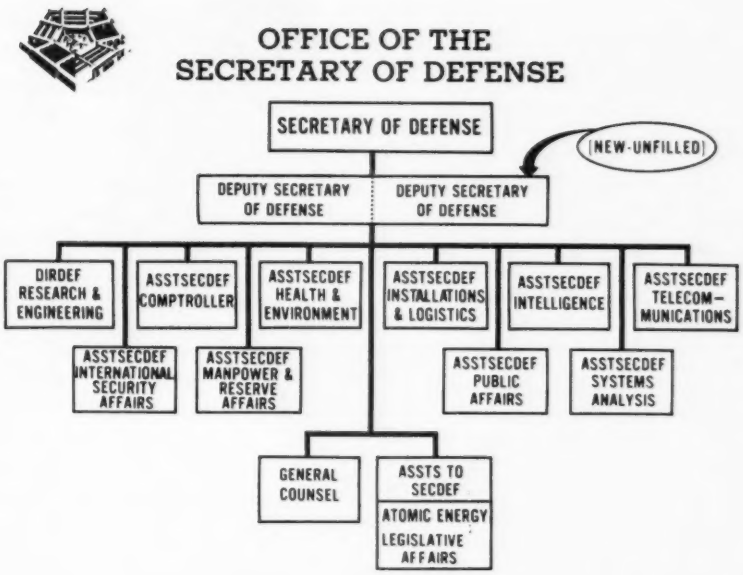
The Office of the Secretary of Defense consists of two Deputy Secretaries of Defense; one of these two positions is held by Mr. William P. Clements Jr., while the second remains vacant. The positions of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering and the General Counsel are specifically provided for by law. The law also makes provisions for



* WITH BACK UP FROM JOINT STAFF

a number of positions as Assistant Secretaries of Defense but does not specify their titles. These positions are filled by the Assistant Secretaries of Defense for Comptroller, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Installations and Logistics, International Security Affairs, Public Affairs, Telecommunications, Health and Environment, Intelligence, and Legislative Affairs. The specialized functions of Systems Analysis and Atomic Energy are discharged by assistants to the Secretary of Defense.

There are two separate channels of authority emanating from the Secretary of Defense. One extends to the Secretaries of the three Military Departments and the other through the JCS to the Unified and Specified Commands. The Secretaries of the Military Departments are responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the operation and efficiency of their Departments. Therefore, the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, and Air Force and Chief of Naval Operations do not directly command the combatant forces of their respective Services. The three Military Departments organize, equip, train, administer and support forces for the prosecution of war. As directed by the President, the Departments assign forces to the Unified and Specified Commands. When these forces are assigned they come under operational command of the Unified and Specified Commanders. However, the forces continue to be administered and supported by the Military Departments concerned. Any forces not assigned to the Unified or Specified Commands remain under the control of the Military Departments.



Under the Secretary of Defense, the JCS implement basic national security policy **through their strategic planning, guidance, and operational direction** to the Commanders-in-Chief of Unified or Specified Commands and in their directives to the Service Chiefs.

The current organization and functions of the JCS system stem from legislation known as the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958. This Act incorporated six major points:

- Operational forces, organized into Unified and Specified Commands, were separated from the Military Departments and were made directly responsible to the Secretary of Defense.
- Operational command of all combat-ready forces was given to the Unified and Specified Commanders. The line of authority extended from the President, as Commander-in-Chief, to the Secretary of Defense, whose orders would be issued to the Unified and Specified Commanders—**through the JCS.**
- The size of the Joint Staff was increased to 400 officers.
- Each Service Chief was authorized

A JCS operations team receives a briefing at the National Military Command Center.

(DoD Photo)

to delegate major portions of his authority and duties to his Vice Chief, so that the Chief might devote his primary attention to his JCS duties. The duties of the Chiefs of the military Services as members of the JCS take precedence over all other duties.

- The Chairman of the JCS should have equal vote with the Service Chiefs in decisions of the JCS.
- The Act also specified that "the Joint Staff shall not operate or be organized as an overall Armed Forces General Staff and shall have no executive authority." It was to operate along conventional staff lines to support the JCS.

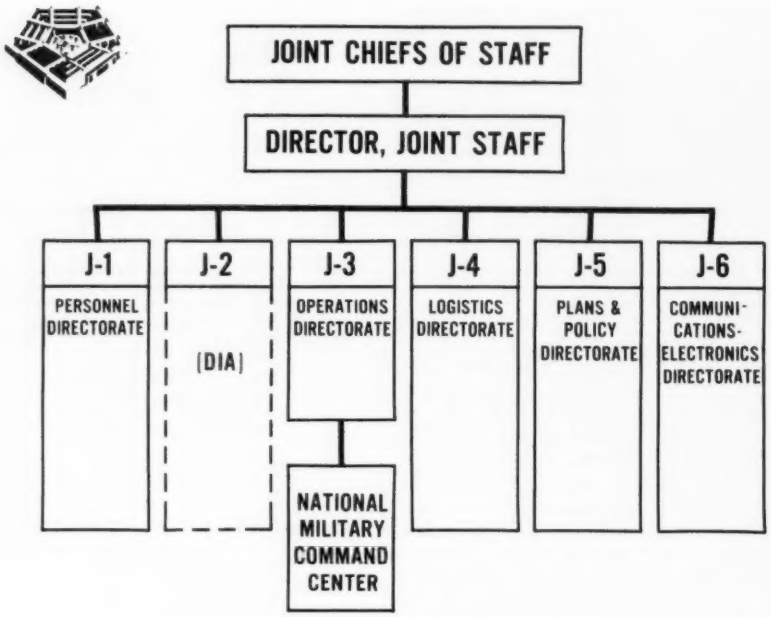
Among the specific responsibilities assigned to the JCS by statute or by the Secretary of Defense are:

- Serve as principal military advisers to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.
- Serve as military staff in the chain of operational command to the Unified and Specified Commands.
- Prepare strategic plans.
- Provide for strategic direction of the Armed Forces, including the direction of operations conducted by the Unified and Specified Commands.
- Review plans, programs and requirements.
- Provide statements of military requirements and strategic guidance for use in the development of budgets, military aid programs, industrial mobilization plans, and research and development programs.
- Establish doctrine for unified operations and training and for coordination of the military education of members of the Armed Forces.
- Provide U.S. military representation to international security organizations, mutual defense boards and commissions.

Each Service Chief is responsible for keeping the Secretary of his Military Department fully informed on matters considered or acted upon by the JCS.

The Joint Staff of the JCS is composed of equal numbers of officers from the three Military Departments. Of the Navy complement, about 20 percent are U.S. Marine Corps officers.

The Joint Staff's primary mission is to prepare reports which serve as the bases for decisions made by the JCS. And, it performs such duties as the Chairman of the JCS or the JCS may prescribe.



MAJOR FUNCTIONS

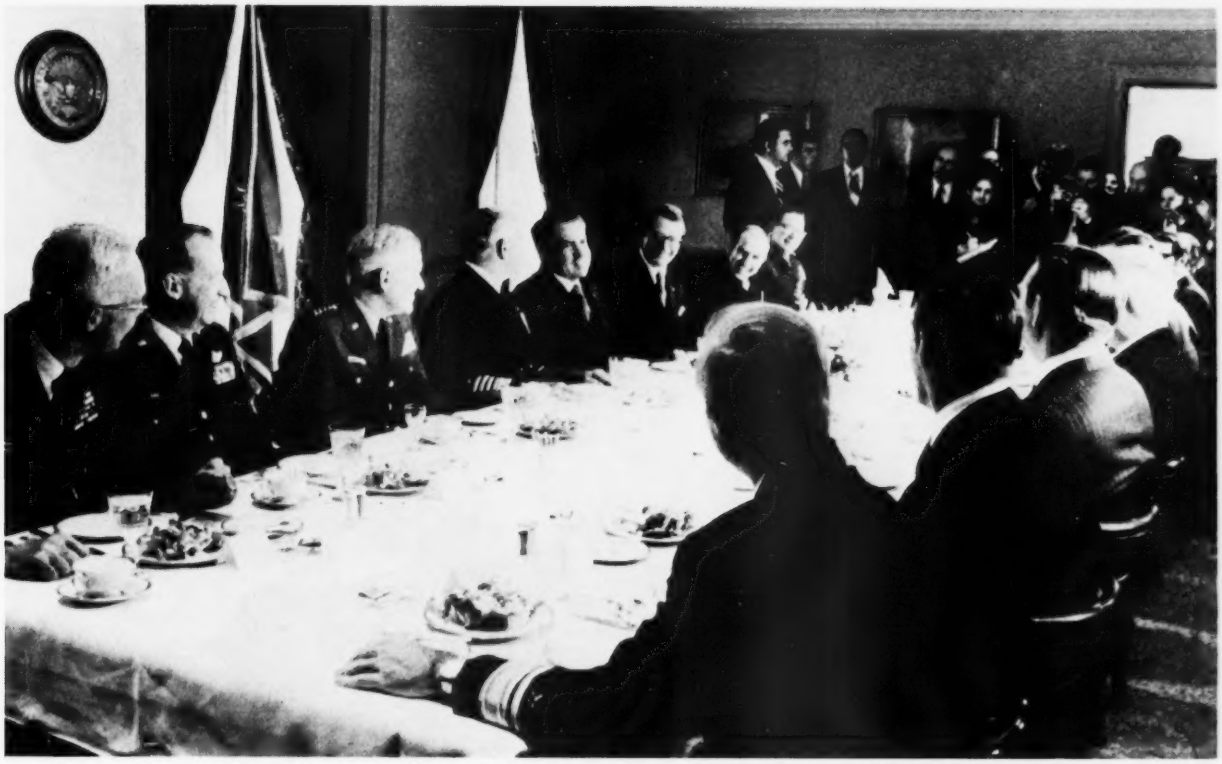
- PRINCIPAL ADVISORS
- PREPARE PLANS
- STRATEGIC DIRECTION
- REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
- REVIEW PLANS
- TRAINING AND EDUCATION
- REPRESENTATION-U.N., OTHER

The Director of the Joint Staff is an officer of three-star rank, appointed for not more than a three year term by the Chairman of the JCS, with the approval of the Secretary of Defense and the advice of the JCS.

Besides managing the Joint Staff as directed by the Chairman of the JCS, the Director meets with the Operations Deputies and attends the meetings of the JCS. Assisting him are a Vice Director and a Deputy Director who are officers of two-star rank and must be from different Military Departments.

Except for certain special advisory functions and activities, the Joint Staff is organized along conventional lines: Personnel (J-1); Operations (J-3); Logistics (J-4); Plans and Policy (J-5); and Communications-Electronics (J-6). The Intelligence function, normally designated (J-2), is performed for the JCS and the Joint Staff by the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).

Each of these principal staff offices is headed by a general or flag officer and is sub-divided into staff divisions and branches. The branches consist of one or more officers from each of the Military Departments. The Director of the Joint Staff, the Director of (J-3) and the Director of (J-5) must be from different



President Nixon lunches with the JCS and other Pentagon officials at the Secretary of Defense dining room.

(DoD Photo)

Military Departments. The normal tour of duty for a member of the Joint Staff is three years, although some may serve for two years.

There are a number of activities which are not part of the Joint Staff. Because their titles are self-explanatory, there is no need to explain their functions. They include: the Special Assistant to the JCS for Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT); the Special Assistant to the JCS for Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR); the JCS Representative, Law of the Sea; Assistant for Automation (Data Processing); and Director of Administrative Services.

Of the eleven Defense agencies within the Department of Defense, four report through the JCS. They are the Defense Communications Agency (DCA); Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA); Defense Mapping Agency (DMA) and Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA). The Agencies reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense are the National Security Agency/Central Security Service (NSA/CSS); Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA); Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA); Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (DCPA); Defense Investigative Service (DIS); Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA) and Defense Supply Agency (DSA).

Navy Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, currently serving as Chairman of the JCS, is the senior officer in the U.S. Armed Forces and the only full-time member of the JCS. However, he does not exercise military command over the JCS or any of the Military Departments. He is appointed by the President from the officers of the Regular components of the Armed Forces and serves at the President's pleasure for a term of two years. He may be reappointed for an additional two-year term. Adm. Moorer was recently appointed to his second term as Chairman of the JCS. As with other Presidential appointments, the Chairman of the JCS is subject to Senate confirmation. During wartime, the two-year period of service may be waived. The Chairman prepares the agenda for, and presides over, the meetings of the JCS. He is responsible for keeping the Secretary of Defense informed of JCS recommendations and matters under consideration by the JCS and insures that the Organization of the JCS functions to carry out the tasks effectively. In addition, he manages the Joint Staff on behalf of the JCS and attends the meetings of the National Security Council.

The Chiefs of Services, and hence the other members of the JCS, are: General John D. Ryan, U.S. Air Force; General Creighton W. Abrams, U.S. Army; Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., U.S. Navy; and General Robert E. Cushman Jr., U.S. Marine Corps.

One of the major tasks confronted by the JCS involves problem solving. Annually, approximately 1,000 formal decisions from thousands of papers are reached by the JCS, most of which are based on studies and reports produced

Daily tests are made between Washington and Moscow on the National Military Command Center's "hot line" teletype link.
(DoD Photo)

by the Joint Staff and the elements of the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Problems requiring Joint Staff study may be received from the President, the Secretary of Defense, or one of the Unified or Specified Commands, or may be originated by the JCS, the Chairman, the Director of the Joint Staff or within the OJCS.

A directorate of the Joint Staff is assigned the primary responsibility for steering the action to completion as a fully coordinated report to the JCS. The directorate, in turn, appoints one of its officers as the primary action officer. The report is coordinated through the Joint Staff agencies and the Service planners with recommendations and suggestions weighed for their ultimate value. Once all views are presented, the JCS give final consideration, and upon agreement the action is implemented by JCS memorandum, message or directive. In the event an agreement can not be reached, the matter may be forwarded for resolution by the Secretary of Defense or returned to the Staff with appropriate guidance.

While "spot" problems can be handled on a day-to-day basis as they arise, formal military planning is a continuing operation. The JCS plans form the basic direction and guidance to the Unified and Specified Commands and the Services for the conduct of planning and operations. Since national and international conditions are constantly changing, these plans are generally revised frequently.

The JCS provide the basic guidance from which all supporting plans are developed. Also, all such plans are in accord with the plans of collective security organizations such as NATO and SEATO. In addition, in the field of planning is the review of contingency plans prepared by the Commanders-in-Chief of Unified and Specified Commands. These commanders prepare operational plans **under the broad guidance of a capabilities plan or other JCS directive, and submit them to the JCS for their review and approval.**

A surveillance officer at the National Military Command Center records an aircraft sighting on a computer console.

(DoD Photo)

This review is conducted primarily to determine if the plans are responsive, operationally sound, and can be logistically supported. These provide a planning frame of reference if specific trouble spots develop.

The JCS organization can and does respond with the degree of speed dictated by operational requirements. The Joint Staff develops the machinery needed for coordination between the military and other agencies of Government, particularly the Department of State.

Over the years, Berlin, Jordan, Korea and Vietnam situations have afforded opportunities for the JCS to demonstrate its capability to operate in today's increasingly complex politico-military environment.

Command Post

The hub of all JCS activities is located in the National Military Command Center near the River Entrance to the Pentagon and one floor below the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In the event of an emergency, there is an alternate command center in Maryland, and, in the event of an attack on Washington, there is the national emergency airborne command post, an aircraft ready 24 hours a day at Andrews AFB, Maryland, to allow the OJCS to conduct its operations aloft.

The Pentagon's command center is the hub and terminal of the worldwide command and control communications system. Its sole purpose is to provide command authorities, through JCS, a medium whereby strategic direction of U.S. military forces anywhere in the world can be assured. The center is in operation 24 hours a day with each duty shift headed by a general or flag officer.

The center provides for effective coordination and liaison with all other U.S. Government agencies or systems, such as the White House Situation Room, State Department, Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency. Military information is provided to associated systems through the center, using direct, secure, and reliable methods of communications. It also provides automated systems for presentation of many kinds of data in the decision-making process and is the command and control facility giving rapid communication links between the National Command Authority, the JCS and the Unified and Specified Commands.

In a more general precept, the JCS operate as a corporate body similar to an executive board of any large corporation. Each year, they provide a prospectus (the annual Posture Statement and Defense Budget) for review by the Secretary of Defense. At the completion of his analysis, the Secretary presents it to the President. The President, in turn, sends it with his recommendations to Members of Congress for their final approval.

Other agencies that perform vital functions for the JCS are:

- U.S. Representative to the Military Committee, NATO.
- U.S. Delegation, United Nations Military Staff Committee.
- U.S. Representative to the Permanent Military Deputies Group, Central Treaty Organization.
- U.S. Delegation, Inter-American Defense Board.
- U.S. Delegation, Joint Brazil-United States Military Commission.
- U.S. Section, Joint Mexico-United States Defense Commission.
- U.S. Military Representation, Permanent Joint Board on Defense, Canada-United States.
- U.S. Section, Canada-United States Military Cooperation Committee.
- Joint Transportation Board.
- Joint Materiel Priorities and Allocations Board.

In conclusion, when the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is put in its proper perspective, it is as good as DoD knows how to make it. Internal reorganizations are a fact of life in this organization which must be capable of responding effectively to threats to the security of our country.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff

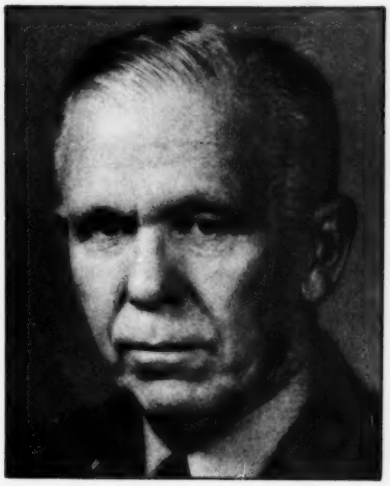
THE formation of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) developed as an outgrowth of a decision made by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill to establish a combined supreme Anglo-American military body for the strategic direction of World War II. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff were established as the U.S. representation to that combined body.

By March 1942, membership of the JCS had been established. It consisted of General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; Admiral Ernest J. King, USN, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations; and General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

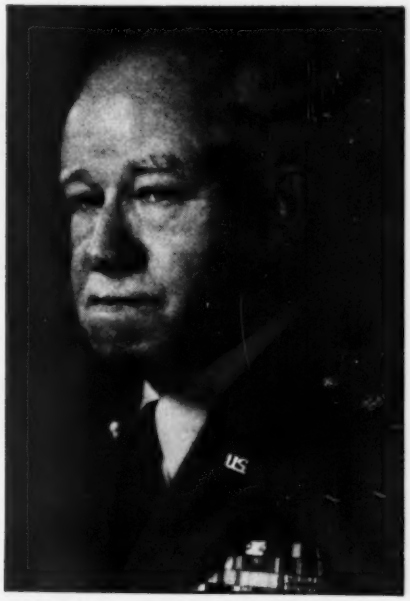
In July 1942, Admiral William D. Leahy, USN, was appointed to the newly-created position of Chief of Staff to the President and was added to the JCS as senior presiding member. These four officers constituted the first organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and stayed in their respective positions throughout the remainder of World War II. Each officer was subsequently promoted to five-star rank.

At first, the JCS existed informally, advising the President on military strategy; requirements, production and allocation of munitions and shipping; the manpower needs of the Armed Forces and matters of joint Army-Navy policy. (At that time, the Air Corps came under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army.) They also supervised the operations of the Office of Strategic Services and the Army and Navy Staff Colleges.

The supporting organization to the JCS included the Joint Secretariat and a number of standing committees. These committees included the Joint Staff Planners, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, the Joint Logistics Committee, and various others whose



The first United States Joint Chiefs of Staff were appointed in 1942. They were (clockwise) General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces; Admiral Ernest J. King, USN, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations; and senior presiding JCS member, Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the President.



First Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and only surviving five-star rank, is General of the Army Omar N. Bradley. The office was created in 1949.

A PORTRAIT GALLERY OF PAST JCS MEMBERS

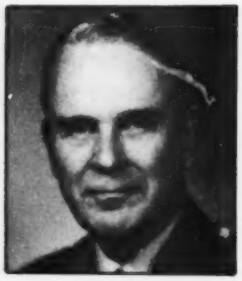
titles indicated their concern with such subjects as intelligence, military transportation, munitions allocations, and communications.

The wartime JCS organization continued its operation into the postwar period until September 17, 1947, which was the effective date of the National Security Act of 1947. It was this Act that formally established the JCS as a permanent agency within the National Military Establishment and designated them as "the principal military advisers to the President and the Secretary of Defense."

The Act further provided for a Joint Staff of not more than 100 officers, operating under a director appointed by and responsible to the JCS. In its initial form, the Joint Staff had three main components, headed by the Deputy Directors for Plans, Intelligence, and Logistics Plans.

In addition, the Act of 1947 set up a Department of the Air Force as a separate Service, co-equal with the Departments of the Army and Navy. Further, it designated the Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, and the Chief of Naval Operations as members of the JCS.

In 1949, amendments to the National Se-



Five former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their dates in office are (clockwise from the lower left) General Earle G. Wheeler, USA, July 1964-July 1970; General Maxwell D. Taylor, USA, October 1962-July 1964; General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, USA, October 1960-September 1962; Admiral Arthur W. Radford, USN, August 1953-August 1957; and General Nathan Twining, USAF, August 1957-September 1960.

curity Act created the office of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, with General Omar N. Bradley, U.S. Army, as the first Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (General Bradley also was later promoted to five-star rank and is the last surviving American officer to be bestowed this honor by his country.)

Later in 1949, amendments increased the size of the Joint Staff to 210 officers and designated the JCS as principal military advisers to the National Security Council in addition to their previously assigned responsibilities.

Legislation, which became effective in June 1952, placed the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps on a co-equal status with members of the JCS when considering matters that directly concern the Marine Corps.

During World War II, the JCS had exercised general direction over all combat operations, usually through one of their members appointed as their executive agent for a particular command. This practice had been continued and specifically authorized by the Key West (Florida) Agreement of 1948. In June 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made changes that implemented his declaration that the JCS was "not a command body" but an advisory group, responsible for formulating strategic plans but not for directing the operations to carry them out. Thereafter, until the end of 1958, a Military Department was designated to direct operations for each Unified or Specified command.

In 1958, with the passage by Congress of the Defense Reorganization Act, extensive changes were made in the organizational operations of the JCS which guide its functions today.

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